UNITED
NATIONS

DP

Governing Council
of the
United Nations
Development Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

DP/1992/SR.1
25 February 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

GOVERNING COUNCIL

Organizational meeting for 1992

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 10 February 1992, at 10 a.m.

Temporary President: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

President: Mr. BREITENSTEIN (Finland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT declared open the organizational meeting of the Governing Council for 1992, and welcomed the newly elected members of the Council.

2. In 1990, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had begun to reform its philosophical approach. The new approach promoted the individual as the central objective which, in the light of current international developments, was particularly appropriate. The triumph of democracy opened the way towards a society in which States identified their raison d'être with the ideal of achieving a qualitatively better life. The Programme could not remain impervious to that universal movement.

3. While there might be some disagreement regarding the form of the human development index, the methodology used to prepare it, the indicators which it comprised, the selection of the international experts who prepared it, or the form in which the indicators were presented, there was nevertheless a consensus on the value and appropriateness of including the human dimension in the classic concept of economic and social development, which had been purely quantitative.

4. Other UNDP activities between February 1991 and February 1992 included the application of the new guidelines for the allocation of Special Programme Resources and adjustments regarding support costs.

5. The Programme had increased its participation in international activities to alleviate the consequences of emergency situations such as those that had arisen in Africa, the Middle East and Central America. In that regard, some delegations had expressed well-founded concerns that critical situations and the priority they deserved should not lead to a reduction of assistance to countries that had embarked on a process of reform and financial reorganization, at high social costs. The rich countries should understand that it was necessary to narrow the gap between the industrialized countries and the developing countries, and UNDP was in an excellent position to assist in the achievement of that goal.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

6. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT invited the Council to elect a Bureau consisting of a President and four Vice-Presidents, due account being taken, in accordance with rule 11 of the rules of procedure, of the need to ensure equitable geographical representation.

7. According to the principle of geographical rotation of the office of President among the different regional groups, the President of the Governing

(The Temporary President)

Council for 1992 should be elected from among the members of the Group of Western European and Other States. That Group had nominated Mr. Wilhelm Breitenstein (Finland) for the office of the President.

8. Mr. Breitenstein (Finland) was elected President by acclamation.

9. Mr. Breitenstein (Finland) took the Chair.

10. The PRESIDENT informed the Council that the following candidates had been nominated by their respective regional groups for election as Vice-Presidents of the Council: Mr. Adouki (Congo) by the Group of African States, Mr. Munteanu (Romania) by the Group of Eastern European States and Mr. Mayorga-Cortés (Nicaragua) by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. The Group of Asian and Pacific States had not yet chosen its candidate, and the Council would return to that issue in the next few days. In the meantime, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to elect by acclamation the three candidates he had named.

11. Mr. Adouki (Congo), Mr. Munteanu (Romania) and Mr. Mayorga-Cortés (Nicaragua) were elected Vice-Presidents by acclamation.

STATEMENT BY THE ADMINISTRATOR

12. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator) said that 1992 would be a very busy year for UNDP. The Council would approve more than 90 country, intercountry and global programmes and would consider such important issues as Special Programme Resources, the Human Development Report, requests from the three Baltic States and Belarus, the indicative planning figures (IPFs) for the fifth programming cycle, and national execution and agency support costs. Moreover, UNDP was taking part in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Programme's resident representatives were also the representatives of the Conference in their countries of assignment. With its partners, the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNDP was carrying out important initiatives in the Global Environment Facility.

13. At the end of January, the members of the Standing Committee for Programme Matters had completed their first visits to the field, which included Egypt, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Tanzania and Botswana. Those visits, reports on which would be submitted to the Council at a later date, would provide the participants with a better understanding of the multifaceted work of the Programme's field offices and of the different issues facing each of the Programme's resident representatives. Such direct contact with UNDP activities in the field would be of considerable value to the Standing Committee as it carried out its important tasks during the first year of the fifth programming cycle.

(Mr. Draper)

14. The results of the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, held in November 1991, had not been very satisfactory. The voluntary contributions were far from the target of an annual growth rate of 8 per cent, which had been set in 1990. Everyone, both donors and recipients, should redouble their efforts to meet and, if possible, surpass that target. So far, owing to budgetary cycles and other reasons, 13 of the 20 largest donors to UNDP had not yet announced their firm contributions for 1992. Given the magnitude of the economic and social problems facing the international community, it was essential to raise the level of contributions to UNDP in order to enable it to have the required impact on development. He thanked all contributors, especially those who had demonstrated their confidence in the Programme by increasing their contributions.

15. In view of the importance of many items on the Council's agenda for 1992, he hoped that the spirit of consensus that had characterized the Council's deliberations in the past would continue to prevail.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (DP/1992/L.1)

16. The PRESIDENT said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the provisional agenda for the organizational meeting as contained in document DP/1992/L.1.

17. It was so decided.

Provisional agenda

18. The PRESIDENT said that under the revised provisional agenda three items had been referred for informal consultations, namely rationalization of the work of the Council, the venue for Council meetings and the Human Development Report. As agreed, the guidelines on national execution and the new provisions on agency support costs would also be considered during informal consultations.

19. Mrs. DUDIK-GAYOSA (United States of America) said that the guidelines on national execution and agency support costs should be considered in the Standing Committee for Programme Matters, and her delegation would prefer the Council to take a decision to that effect.

20. The PRESIDENT said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the provisional agenda, with the amendment proposed by the representative of the United States.

21. It was so decided.

22. Mrs. JANJUA (Pakistan) said that her delegation had already made clear its view that the Standing Committee should not deal with items falling within the terms of reference of the Council plenary. To refer consideration of items relating to agency support costs and national execution to the Standing

(Mrs. Janjua, Pakistan)

Committee would involve doing precisely that. Bearing in mind that a number of delegations had repeatedly opposed that procedure, she called for the decision just adopted to be reconsidered.

23. Mr. BELL (India) said that he was surprised at the decision to consider the guidelines on national execution and agency support costs in the Standing Committee for Programme Matters. When those matters had been discussed during the informal consultations on 16 January 1992, the Secretariat had announced that it was about to send the guidelines to the external offices and that, as agreed by the Governing Council, a report on the results of the application of those guidelines would be submitted to the Council at its ordinary session in May 1992.

24. Apart from the fact that they had not been received far enough in advance, he felt that it would be difficult to examine the guidelines and formulate relevant comments if the matter was dealt with in the Standing Committee for Programme Matters. He agreed with the delegation of Pakistan that the items should be considered in plenary and not in the Standing Committee, which had a very different function. He therefore asked the Council to reconsider its decision.

25. Mr. ROHNER (Switzerland) said that the question of national execution was related to programmes and that it was precisely the task of the Standing Committee for Programme Matters to oversee the execution and application of the programmes. For the time being, the aim was not to consider the guidelines which had recently been distributed and adopt a decision on them, but rather to hold open informal consultations on the matter. He therefore proposed that such consultations be organized and a date for them scheduled.

26. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Governing Council) recalled that during the informal consultations held in January 1992 the Associate Administrator had provided clarification on the matter. On that occasion it had been agreed to hold an informal debate on the subject, and the possibility had been raised of considering the guidelines in an informal working group or in the Standing Committee. In his opinion, informal discussions should be held irrespective of the body concerned, since the important thing was to deal with the matter in the next few days.

27. Mrs. JANJUA (Pakistan), supported by Mr. Bell, pointed out that the guidelines for national execution and agency support costs were not matters relating to the programmes, as the representative of Switzerland had maintained, but were policy questions and as such, even if considered in informal consultations, should be addressed within the framework of the Governing Council plenary and not in the Standing Committee for Programme Matters.

28. Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka) said that in principle matters relating to general and policy questions should be considered as far as possible in plenary. When standing committees were set up and informal discussions held, it was difficult for small delegations to take part in the meetings, particularly if they were held at the same time as plenary sessions. Given that all delegations wished to take part in the debates both on the guidelines and on the Human Development Report, which were policy matters of importance to everyone, it was not appropriate for those matters to be discussed in informal meetings and then brought to the plenary when a decision had virtually been taken.

29. The PRESIDENT said that he understood the concern of the representative of Sri Lanka, but pointed out that the need to hold informal discussions and consultations was a consequence of constraints on the availability of conference services. If all matters were dealt with in plenary, sessions would last too long and prove very costly.

30. Mrs. DUDIK-GAYOSA (United States of America) said that a false distinction was being drawn between policy questions and other matters. Her delegation did not feel that an informal debate on internal guidelines intended as instructions for field offices on how to carry out their work was a policy matter. The guidelines were internal instructions on the implementation of the programmes and the Standing Committee had been set up to consider questions relating to programmes and their execution. It was therefore the appropriate forum for considering the guidelines, which had been drawn up with the cooperation of the field missions. The Standing Committee did not adopt decisions and the debates it held were informal. It was deplorable to set up a standing committee and then be afraid to use it. Her delegation welcomed the Secretariat's decision to provide information on the guidelines, since it was aware of the confusion existing in the field offices as to how the provisions on execution should be applied at national level. Furthermore, the subject should be dealt with during the current month, as it would facilitate UNDP activities in the field. Nevertheless, she did not expect a decision to be taken on the matter at the present session of the Council but at the May session, which would represent a further stage in the process.

31. Mr. AVALLE (Argentina) and Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) supported the proposal that the matter be dealt with in informal discussions within the framework of the plenary, so as to enable the work of the Governing Council to advance.

32. Mrs. JANJUA (Pakistan) pointed out that, although the Standing Committee did not take decisions, but rather approved resolutions which were eventually adopted in plenary, it did conduct substantive debates. Her delegation felt that the debates or any informal meeting organized by the plenary should be held within the framework of the plenary rather than the Standing Committee.

33. Mrs. DUDIK-GAYOSA (United States of America) expressed concern at the prospect of informal consultations being held within the framework of the plenary. In that eventuality, her delegation would prefer that informal consultations be held in parallel with the Council. Holding informal consultations within the framework of the plenary would call into question the very existence of the Standing Committee and would be a departure from the procedure laid down. If some delegations felt that it was too early to deal with the matter, it would be more honest and fairer to say so.

34. Mr. SOUTTER (Canada) said he fully agreed with the observations made by the delegation of the United States. He considered it inappropriate for the time being to place the discussions in a specific context. It would be preferable to continue holding informal consultations outside the Governing Council, since the policies underlying the guidelines under consideration had been approved some time previously. The point at issue was UNDP management procedures with respect to the way in which the guidelines should be implemented.

35. The PRESIDENT suggested that the debate should be suspended and the matter referred to the Bureau for consideration.

RATIONALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (DP/1992/2, DP/1992/2/Add.1 and DP/1991/WP.32)

36. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Governing Council) noted that at its thirty-eighth session held in 1991 the Council had considered the report of the Administrator on the biennialization or triennialization of certain subjects on the agenda and that Germany and the United States had submitted a draft decision on the matter (DP/1991/WP.32). Owing to lack of time, however, the Council had deferred consideration of the draft decision until the current session (decision 1991/51).

37. Document DP/1992/2 contained a note by the Secretariat presenting an overview of subjects considered by the Governing Council in 1991 and subjects to be considered in 1992 and the two following years, in conformity with paragraph 2 of the Council's decision 91/51. In addition, the Council had decided, in paragraph 1 of its decision 91/53, to consider the provisional agenda for its thirty-ninth session at its organizational meeting in February 1992 in the context of matters relating to the work of the Governing Council.

38. He drew the Council's attention to the appeal from the Committee on Conferences referred to in document DP/1992/2 and to General Assembly resolution 46/190 inviting the Governing Council of UNDP to review its meeting and documentation requirements in the light of their significant financial implications and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session through the Committee on Conferences. He also drew the Council's attention to operative paragraphs 11 and 12 of that resolution, in which the General Assembly requested that informal consultations should be undertaken for the purpose of improving the utilization of

conference-servicing resources and that the results of those consultations should be reported to the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences. In the light of that General Assembly resolution, the Governing Council might wish to review its agenda and its meeting and documentation requirements in the context of the discussion on the rationalization of its work so as to submit a response to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

39. He noted that it had been agreed to discuss the subject of rationalization of the work of the Council in an informal working group during that session.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE GOVERNING COUNCIL: VENUE (DP/1992/CRP.1)

40. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Governing Council), after reviewing the background information provided in meeting document DP/1992/CRP.1, said that, according to estimates made by the United Nations Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, the overall cost of holding the thirty-ninth session of the Governing Council would be greater in New York than in Geneva. However, the difference would be partly offset by the net travel expenses incurred to enable staff to attend a session in Geneva.

41. He noted that it had been agreed to consider the matter of the venue of Council meetings in an informal working group during the session.

42. Mr. KOIKE (Japan) said that his country had been one of those proposing that the question of the Council's venue should be reconsidered. Two different criteria had been used in document DP/1992/CRP.1 to calculate the cost of sessions in Geneva and in New York: in the first case overtime costs had not been included and in the second case they had. His delegation, in conjunction with other members of the Council, intended to submit a draft decision on the matter, which he hoped would be considered as though it had been submitted at a plenary meeting.

43. The PRESIDENT said that there would be an opportunity to resume discussion of the matter in plenary after the informal consultations had taken place. The delegation of Japan would then be able to submit its proposal.

44. Mr. ROHNER (Switzerland) said that, in addition to the financial aspects, there were other important aspects of the arrangements for the Governing Council's venue that his delegation wished to see addressed during the official consultations.

MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL IN 1992 (DP/1992/L.2 AND DP/1992/L.2/Add.1; DP/1992/L.3; DP/1992/1)

45. The PRESIDENT said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the provisional agenda and the provisions for the session set out in documents DP/1992/L.2 and DP/1992/L.2/Add.1.

46. It was so decided.

47. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Governing Council) said that in its decision 91/53 the Governing Council had decided to review the provisional agenda for the thirty-ninth session of the Council at its organizational meeting within the context of its review of matters relating to its work.

48. With regard to the tentative schedule of work set out in the annex to document DP/1992/L.3, he said that the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) would, as usual, present her annual report on the first day of the Council session, and all subjects relating to UNFPA would be considered during the first week.

49. The Administrator of UNDP would present his annual report at the end of the first week. In paragraph 2 of its decision 91/53, the Governing Council had decided that the policy review item to be considered at the high-level segment of its thirty-ninth session would be the annual report of the Administrator for 1991 and priority areas identified therein.

50. It was expected that a large number of programmes would be submitted to the Council at the thirty-ninth session. UNFPA had estimated that approximately 31 country programmes would be submitted in May 1992, while UNDP had estimated approximately 69 country and intercountry programmes and 45 extensions. The Standing Committee would have to meet almost continuously during the thirty-ninth session to consider them, interrupting its meetings only during the high-level segment. As in previous years, the Council could entrust its Bureau with the task of adjusting the schedule of meetings within the overall allocation of services to ensure the smoothest possible conduct of the session.

51. With reference to the allocation of items to the Standing Committee for Programme Matters and the Budgetary and Finance Committee and to the work of the Drafting Group (DP/1992/L.3, Parts II, III and IV), the fact that the opening of the session had been brought forward one month would make it difficult to distribute on time the documents containing financial and other information, which would not be ready before mid-March or April. Accordingly, as in previous years, he invited the Governing Council to waive the ten-week rule with respect to the documents listed in Part IV of document DP/1992/L.3. The remainder of the documentation was being processed several months earlier than usual, and accordingly, most of those documents would be distributed on time.

52. Mrs. DUDIK-GAYOSA (United States of America) said she recognized the difficulties caused by bringing the session forward, and proposed that the work on the arrangements for the main session of the Council should be completed after the negotiations on the rationalization of its work had been concluded, since what was decided in that respect would affect future sessions. She was also concerned that very little time would be available for examining the many UNFPA and UNDP programmes, and recalled the unwritten rule that had applied during the fourth cycle, namely that not more than five programmes should be considered each day. Her delegation would not be able to

(Mrs. Dudik-Gayosa, United States)

consider programmes which did not arrive at the scheduled time, that was to say, at least six weeks in advance. At the current session, programmes were approximately half of what had been expected, on the basis of what had happened in 1991, and that was no surprise. She would like to know if there would really be 75 UNDP country programmes, and whether more days could be allocated so that they could be considered properly, bearing in mind that that task was one of the Council's most important functions. In that connection, she suggested that another session of the Standing Committee and the Council should be held between February and September 1992.

53. Mr. ROHNER (Switzerland) said he had studied the schedule of work carefully and noted that there were three meetings to be held simultaneously, in addition to all the informal consultations, which would certainly be very difficult for the majority of delegations. He also pointed out that it was not realistic to consider 33 programmes in a day and a half.

54. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Governing Council) said that the number of UNFPA country programmes had currently been reduced to 31, and he would leave it to the representative of UNFPA to consider the desirability of holding three sessions. The UNDP programmes currently numbered 69, and 12 days or 24 meetings were available for their consideration.

55. Mr. KITATANI (United Nations Population Fund) welcomed the desire to allocate more time for in-depth consideration of the programmes to be submitted by UNFPA; although those programmes related to only one aspect, namely population, and consequently required less time than the UNDP programmes, UNFPA felt honoured by the Council's suggestion.

56. Mr. SOUTTER (Canada) agreed with the representatives of the United States and Switzerland that his delegation would not be able to consider properly programmes which did not arrive sufficiently in advance. With respect to the schedule of work, given that the high-level segment would focus on the Administrator's annual report and delegations wished to be represented by their highest officials, he requested that the priority themes of the report should be made known in advance so that participants could be adequately briefed.

57. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator) said that it was a broad and comprehensive report which would afford delegations the necessary flexibility to consider the issues they wished, rather than restricting them.

58. Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) said he definitely shared the view of the representatives of the United States and Switzerland; as in the case of support costs and national execution, the Council was touching upon another basic issue, namely the way in which the Programme utilized its resources. Accordingly, it was absolutely essential to allocate enough time to the subject and accord it proper attention. His delegation also considered that if it was not possible to consider the

(Mr. Machin, United Kingdom)

programmes in depth, they could obviously not be authorized, which would mean having to postpone them until September.

59. The PRESIDENT said that if there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to approve the proposal of the United States delegation, to the effect that the final decision on arrangements for the thirty-ninth session should be taken in May, after considering at the current session the question of the rationalization of the Council's work.

60. It was so decided.

61. The PRESIDENT said that if there was no objection, he would take it that, as at the special session in previous years, the Council wished to waive rule 22 of its rules of procedure regarding the requirement that there be a quorum of one third of the members of the Governing Council to open a meeting or proceed with a debate.

62. It was so decided.

63. The PRESIDENT, with reference to the items to be discussed by the Standing Committee for Programme Matters in May 1992, said that if there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to endorse the suggestions contained in paragraph 8 of document DP/1992/L.3.

64. It was so decided.

65. The PRESIDENT said that if there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to allocate to the Budgetary and Finance Committee the items listed in paragraph 11 of document DP/1992/L.3.

66. It was so decided.

67. The PRESIDENT said that if there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to reaffirm the principles guiding the work of the Drafting Group contained in decision 83/1, section III, and quoted in paragraphs 12 and 13 of document DP/1992/L.3.

68. It was so decided.

69. The PRESIDENT, referring to the 10-week rule for the submission of some documents, said that if there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to waive its application to the documents listed in paragraph 16 of document DP/1992/L.3.

70. It was so decided.

71. Mrs. DUDIK-GAYOSA (United States of America), referring to the item on the senior management structure, said that while it was appropriate to discuss it in the first place in plenary, given that administrative resources, both human and financial, would be discussed, arrangements should be made to transfer the item thereafter to the Budgetary and Finance Committee.

72. The PRESIDENT said that if there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to approve the proposal made by the representative of the United States.

73. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.